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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: MISSION HOSTS TWO LIVE POTUS' ACCRA SPEECH EVENTS WITH ROUNDTABLES

¶1. (U) Summary: Mission Nigeria hosted media, civil society, and private sector interlocutors simultaneously on July 11 in Abuja and Lagos to watch a live broadcast of President Obama's speech in Accra, Ghana. Over 50 total participants attended the two events, including Ghana Consul General Sylvester J.K. Parker-Allotey, who also joined the Ambassador and ConGen for the subsequent roundtable discussion. Both locations (Abuja and Lagos) also used social media through Microsoft Communicator for instant messaging with each other and with Main State in Washington, to facilitate better communication and the free exchange of ideas during the event. SMS broadcast services were used to get messages out before and after the event. End Summary.

¶2. (U) In the roundtable discussion following POTUS' live broadcast, several participants at both events opined that the speech sent a very strong message to Nigeria on electoral reform, free press, anti-corruption and free and fair elections. In addition, there were other comments, such as that by Lagos activist Eneruvie Enakoko of the Civil Liberties Organization, who expressed disappointment with the USG's "double standard" and "hard line" approach taken with various African countries, specifically Zimbabwe and Sudan, while remaining largely silent on criticism of Nigeria's shortcomings. However, Enakoko later suggested that the U.S. must toughen its approach with Nigeria if its politicians are to get the message, a view also shared by many others present.

¶3. (SBU) Peter Eluemunor of Leadership newspaper happily noted the shift in focus from aid in the form of donations, to partnership and friendship, while echoing Obama's message that it was up to Africans to secure a better future for themselves and their societies as a whole. His outspoken colleague Emmanuel Iffer applauded Obama for not visiting Nigeria, which he claimed would have tacitly endorsed the current Nigerian leadership, and added that "the speech will send shivers down the backs" of the old guard Nigerian political elite. Iffer later proposed requiring the children of top politicians and civil servants to attend Nigerian schools rather than those abroad to see first-hand the poor state of education in Nigeria. Abuja-based journalist Mazino Dickson-Amagada of Nigerian Television Authority (NTA) International, commented that although the President brought up the U.S. Africa Command, he did not mention where the headquarters will ultimately be located. One manager from Channels TV reflected more broadly on what the media is doing to promote change, and then criticized a majority of the

Nigerian press for being only reactive to events. Responding to this reflection, another journalist complained that many media outlets are owned and controlled by political actors with vested interests in the status quo.

¶4. (U) Other key themes discussed at both venues were good governance, electoral reform, youth empowerment, infrastructure development, and the need for economic development and diversification of exports, with a focus on the agricultural sector. Ghanaian CG Parker-Allotey cited security, diplomacy, and development as the three most important areas for improvement in African countries. He also cautioned not to view security through the singular lens of terrorism, but also food security. Other topics of discussion included the importance of health programs, a free press, respect for diversity, conflict in the Niger Delta, and the negative effects of a "brain drain" of educated and talented youth leaving Nigeria for better employment opportunities and social and economic conditions.

¶5. (U) Comment: President Obama's speech was well-received and appeared to resonate with many Nigerians who voiced their frustration with the country's corruption, bad governance, and lack of transparency, particularly with elections. For those who criticized Obama's speech or his trip to Ghana, we believe that below the surface lies the reluctant admission that Nigeria has a ways to go before it can shine like its smaller neighbor to the west. To many of the older participants in the roundtable discussion, the solution rests on the shoulders of the younger members of the audience, some of whom chanted Obama's "Yes We Can" mantra at points

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throughout the broadcast. The reality, however, is that deeply entrenched political and economic interests in the country's status quo will make this an enormously difficult struggle for whoever decides to take the first step. End comment.

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